CROYDON RAILWAY STATION

AN EXPERIMENT IN CONCRETE CONSTRUCTION

1875-1891 - TWO TRACK PERIOD

A high level of accessibility to public transport is an attribute for many people but not everyone desires it. The history of Croydon after the Sydney-Granville line opened in 1855 is one where the absence of a station was an attraction, not a detriment. Wealthy people liked the area because of its lack of public transport, which local history author, Eric Dunlop, argues gave the location an "exclusiveness".[1] Wealthy people had their own transport whereby they could catch the train at either Burwood or Ashfield, a choice not available to people of lesser financial means. Both Anthony Horden and Edward Lloyd Jones lived at now Croydon in the 1870s and 1880s. Other influential merchants, including David Holbrow, also lived there.

In 1868, another local resident, Henry Fox, presented the Commissioner for Railways with a petition containing 34 signatures requesting a railway station – on Fox's property. Dunlop indicates that further petitions followed from other people. The Commissioner took no action.

The present Croydon station is half in the Municipality of Burwood and half in the Municipality of Ashfield. Ashfield was proclaimed a Municipality in 1872 and Burwood two years later. This boundary was an important part in the decision to open a new station because both local government authorities agreed on its location. With the railway came land subdivision and, with that, people of less but still considerable wealth decided to settle in the area.

A station was opened in 1875 under the name, Five Dock, and renamed Croydon in 1876. The station opening was a direct result of local action to the Department of Public Works but not by people from the present Five Dock but big landholders adjacent to the railway line. The first site was located about 100 metres on the down side near Webb Street but it was possibly relocated to its present site with the name change.[2] Eric Dunlop explains that the name was changed because the inhabitants of Five Dock were insulted by the name selection, as the station was a long way from the suburb of that

[1] E. Dunlop, *Between Two Highways*, no details, p. 23

[2] Railway Archives Officer, John Forsyth, makes no mention of the different sites in his book, *Station Names*. Dunlop incorrectly captioned a photo in *Between the Highways*, Plate IIa, of the second station as being the first station. He tripped himself up when he wrote on p. 39 that the original platforms were timber. The photograph shows a packed-earth platform.

name.[3] Perhaps the angst of Five Dock residents was the first hint of vested interests by local landholders in successfully lobbying the Colonial Government to provide the station?

The second hint of action by vested interests of land developers was a protest by residents of Summer Hill in 1879 about the higher level of facilities at the second station at Croydon, which had less population than Summer Hill.[4]

The third hint of foul play was the selection of the new name of the station name, Croydon, allegedly done to mimic the distance between a racecourse at Homebush with the suburb of Croydon and its nearby racecourse in England.[5] Pollon states that the name was changed because there was confusion by travellers as Five Dock was not near the present Croydon station.[6] It was not confusion but anger as the Railway Commissioner mis-named yet another station name, a trend that had started in 1855 when Granville station was named Parramatta. The erroneousness of local confusion is reflected in the very choice of the name, Croydon, because the NSW Railways actually increased the level of geographic confusion. Why would the NSW Government agree to select the name Croydon when there were towns and railway stations of that name in Queensland, Victoria and South Australia? It is well documented that Governments often altered station names to avoid conflicts with similar named locations in other colonies and states. There must have been a reason where those in charge of naming places went out of their way to induce a conflict!

The last hint involved the release of land adjacent to the new railway station buildings in 1880. The then local Ashfield Mayor, the affluent and influential merchant, Daniel Holborow, had owned the land since 1870 and, suddenly, put the land on the market.[7] Holbrow and others were willing to sell their large land holdings, which had given them privacy and status, once there was lots of money to be made.

From 1877 to 1891, the Croydon Post Office was located on one of the station's platforms. The Station Master performed all postal duties from 1877 until 1883, when a Post Mistress, the daughter of the Station Master, was appointed to the position.

[3] E. Dunlop, *Harvest of the Years*, Burwood Municipal Council, no date, p. 56
[4] Ibid., p. 95
[5] John Forsyth in his book, *The How and Why of Station Names*, does not mention the relationship between the racecourses in Australia and England.
[6] F. Pollon, *The Book of Sydney Suburbs*, Pymble, Harper Collins, 1996, p. 76.
[7] S. and R. Coupe, *Speed the Plough*, Ashfield Municipal Council, 1988, p. p. 99

It seems that, like all other stations on the Sydney-Strathfield line, the initial platforms were timber and the buildings basic.[8] In 1880, the Department of Public Works built a new platform buildings and it is possible, at that time, that the platforms were renewed with packed earth with brick walls and copings. The brick buildings were atypical and looked much like a Pioneer station of the 1890s, as at Inverell and Grenfell. A photograph of part of one of the buildings is in Ron Preston's Book, *125 Years of the Sydney to Parramatta Railway.* It was demolished in 1933.[9]

When the author was writing material about Croydon 30 years ago, he explained the atypical design of the 1880 platform buildings as an outcome of the NSW Government focus on rural railways and a general disinterest in suburban railways. This interpretation remains correct but is not the complete story. John Whitton was always in charge of new works on new lines but not always new works on existing lines. He lost control of such work between 1867 and 1869 and from 1878 until his retirement in 1889. Thus, it was during Whitton's tenure that the station at Croydon was approved and built. The station at Croydon was the first of what could only be described as an explosion of new capital works at stations between Sydney and Parramatta in the 1870s. After Petersham and Lidcombe were added to the existing 1855 station later in that decade, no new stations were opened on the Sydney-Parramatta line until Croydon in 1875. Was Whitton taken by surprise at the need for a new station on the line? No!

The history of Croydon was mixed up in a Colonial-wide hiatus in the design for station buildings. On the Main South beyond Goulburn, Whitton was playing with new designs for both stations and residences. He applied different designs at Gunning and Bowning and, after these, decided not to build any further permanent buildings on platforms on the Main South to Albury. Even the great structure at Albury was built over a year after the line was opened. On the Main West, Whitton built structures to different designs as far as Orange and then abandoned all previous styles. On the Main North, Whitton's strategy was to built the smallest possible platform structures and eliminate all free-standing houses for Station Masters. Consistency of design did not revisit the NSW Railways until after 1880. In other words, the use of an atypical design at Croydon was built towards the end of a decade of design confusion and inconsistency but was typical of what was occurring elsewhere in the colony. It is noteworthy that a residence for a Porter-in-Charge was erected in 1880 at Croydon, this being the year when design policy, especially the co-construction of platform buildings and free-standing residences for officers-in-charge of stations, was being introduced.

[8] There are secondary sources that suggest that the first platforms were staggered but no evidence has been cited by the author. Staggered platforms at Croydon would be consistent with other locations on the line at the time.

[9] There is a claim that this building was demolished in 1927 for sextuplication but this is incorrect. There is a better photograph Coupe, *op. cit.,* p. 141

The evidence that the suburb of Croydon was growing in the 1880s is reflected in the Colonial Government's decision to build a new and larger post office. It must have been on Railway land as the Chief Commissioner, E.M.G. Eddy, approved the design of the brick building, which could only be described as a mixture of architectural design. It was located at the western end of the up platform fronting Edwin Street. It was a classy affair with a very steep roof pitch, 18 feet ceiling height, a patterned slate roof, nine pane top window sashes and soldier bricks placed above the slightly arched-headed windows.[10]

Graham Harper writes that it would appear that no signalling was provided at Croydon until the late 19th century. The first interlocking in the state occurred at nearby Burwood in 1881. If there were to be signals and block telegraph at Croydon, it would have occurred after that year. Some evidence of a double line era signal box at Croydon existed in the form of a photograph displayed in the bar of the old Croydon Hotel, but this erstwhile institution has since disappeared along with the photograph.

Graham continues that the photograph showed clearly a set of level crossing gates and a nearby signal box at the northern end of Croydon platforms. It may have been a full block signal box, or, perhaps just a gate cabin. In any event, the level crossing had disappeared by 1892 when the quadruplication works through Croydon were completed, the crossing having been replaced by the extant overbridge at the Strathfield end of the station. The level crossing served Edwin Street. Graham adds a note that Croydon is famous in the annals of time because for a period of time the ARHS Archives were located in a shopfront building in this Street. The Archives workers, when not in residence, could usually be found in the Croydon Hotel, where an excellent meal could be obtained.

John Forsyth, the former SRA Archives Manager, noted that the level crossing was interlocked in 1885, but does not advise whether as a block station or merely a crossing box.

1892-1926 - FOUR TRACK PERIOD

Chief Commissioner Eddy did not stop at approving the new post office. Eddy directed James Angus, his Engineer-in-Chief for Existing Lines, to prepare and approve a completely new, standard station design at Croydon. In 1891, he implemented his large-scale plan to amplify track space between Illawarra Junction and Homebush by adding two additional tracks. At Croydon, this involved the re-arrangement of platforms. The two side platforms were replaced by a centre, island platform flanked by a side platform on each side. The arrangement was consistent with track layouts at most other

[10] A photograph of the building is in Coupe, op. cit., p. 141. It was demolished in 1926.

stations on the corridor. The level crossing at the Sydney end was replaced by a 15 feet wide subway, which gave access to the four platforms. The surface of the subway featured 'tar paving'. There was stone capping on top of brickwork and four- rail pipe fencing 4' 7 ½" high. Blonde bricks were used in the subway, which was a very unusual colour for the NSW Railways.

On the platforms were timber platform structures with low-pitched, hipped roofs partly obscured by wide fascias formed by vertical boarding. The contractor was John Ahearn, a builder who erected most of the stations on the Strathfield-Homebush line in the early 1890s. The platform awnings were supported by extensions of the ceiling joists but also used smallish, ornate brackets and a few vertical columns beyond the building alignment. The design represented the first major move away from posted verandahs on platforms. Unlike most other stations on the line, James Angus decided to leave the existing 1880 brick building on the Up Fast platform on the northern side of the station rather than replace it with a smaller, timber waiting room. There was also one significant aspect of the approved plan that was not built. It was intended to erect a high-class, brick overhead booking office at the Strathfield end of the station, similar to those at Redfern and Newtown. 'Not built' is scribed on plan. With the 1892 quadruplication, the evidence suggests that pedestrian access was removed at the western end until the alterations in either 1924 for sextuplication. [11] Eric Dunlop argues that there was access to the platforms from the road overbridge from 1892.[12] The available evidence does not support this, especially when the brick overhead booking office was not built.

My Hayes, the Station Master at Croydon, was credited in the *Advertiser* newspaper with the appearance of the 1892 station. The press article said that Mr. Hayes had "artistic taste" and complimented him on the "very handsome appearance" of the station with its trees and shrubs. [13] Little did the newspaper reporter notice that almost every station between Redfern and Homebush featured the same building style and the same trees and shrubs.

The station was connected to the local sewerage system in 1902. Water and gas main were available from the early 1880s but it is unknown when these services were extended to the station. The absence of water tanks in the plans for the quadruplication buildings suggests that the water was connected to the station before 1892. Indeed, as Jon Breen, the retired Heritage Officer for the former Water Board, states, reticulation of water is essential for connection to the sewerage system.

[11] There are secondary sources that indicate that there was access to the platforms at the down end between 1892 and 1927 but the author has not viewed the evidence.
[12] Dunlop, *Between the Highways*, p. 69
[13] Coupe, op. cit., p. 140

In the 19th century, the social status of the residents of Croydon diminished twice. Firstly, the opening of the station in 1875 attracted new, less affluent dwellers. Secondly, after 1880, land subdivisions attracted people with lower, but still substantial funds. The third reduction in the social status of Croydon's inhabitants occurred in the first decade of the 20th century. It was the result of the provisions of the Local Government Act of 1906. This legislation facilitated the subdivision of estates but also allowed local government authorities to prescribe the level of building standards. In 1909, Burwood Municipal Council specified that all houses on two large new estates were to be of brick or stone and roofed with slate or tiles. It was from this time that Croydon gained its appearance of free-standing brick cottages with red, tiled roofs.

Graham Harper provides the following information on signalling. There was apparently no block signal box provided with the 1892 quadruplication. However, home and distant signals were provided on each line to protect the platforms. Each of these signal pairs was operated from its own two levers on the platform concerned. The arrangement, which was common on the main suburban line, seems to reflect appallingly on the efficacy of the block working of the time, as a train stopping at a platform mid section should not require any signals to protect it. Protection should have been solely afforded by the block instruments at each end of the section, in this case Ashfield and Burwood.

The station staff was required to return these signals promptly to danger when a train was standing at the platform, but they were enjoined to remember to clear them again once the train was on the move. The protection afforded by such an arrangement is nebulous to say the least!

The arrangement also applied at block stations when the local block signal box was switched out. There have even been instructions for train guards to operate these signals in the absence of station staff. In this case, it would be necessary for the guard to clear the signals again before rejoining his train, and the margin of safety then offered by these signals would reduce from nebulous to wildly optimistic.

Weekly Notices of 1892 and 1893 refer to the block signal boxes at Croydon and Burwood and we can glean from these references that Croydon did have a signal box and that it, and the one at Burwood, could be switched out of section in quieter periods. The Notices also refer to a Guard's Lock on the platform levers to enable them to be locked normal with the associated signals at danger.

By 1897, however, the signal levers had to be locked in the reverse position, with signals clear, by the signalman prior to switching in the signal box. This meant that the signals were operated solely by the signalman during his hours of duty, and platform staff was required to take no interest in their operation. At the conclusion of his shift, and after switching the signal box out, the signalman would hand the key to the platform

signals to a designated person who could then make it available to the platform staff for train protection.

In 1904, Croydon Box was open for about 7 ½ hours a day, covering the morning and evening peak hours. On Saturdays, it was also open in the middle of the day for the 'shoppers' peak'. It was closed on Sundays. These hours were often extended to allow special trains to operate.

Traffic was burgeoning, and automatic signalling was introduced between Ashfield and Strathfield on the Suburban Lines on May 3, 1914. The Main Lines were similarly treated a week later on May 10. If Croydon signal box still existed at this point (and it is assumed that it did), it certainly did not survive automatic signalling.

The automatic signals were (then) conventional two arm signals; a 'home' arm at the top and beneath it, a fish-tailed distant arm. The scheme of indications for these signals was identical with that of the block signals they replaced. However, the block section was reduced to basically the distance between any two adjoining signals rather than between the block signal boxes that had been supplanted.

This type of automatic signal soon fell into disfavour, and by 1915, upper quadrant automatic signals were being placed at new installations, and also replacing the older two arm signals. This occurred on the Main Suburban Line later in the decade.

The last lower quadrant automatic signals existed until about 1980 between Farley and Lochinvar, in the Hunter Valley.

1921-1927 - THE EXPERIMENT WITH CONCRETE

Planning for the addition of two additional tracks was well underway from 1920. In 1921, the first plan was prepared for a new footbridge with pedestrian access from the Strathfield end of the station. The design was typical of the time and was similar to those timber structures that exist today at Dulwich Hill and Tempe. Nothing happened. The material chosen for the walls was not stated. However, the circumstantial evidence suggests that it was to be concrete. As well as a new elevated Booking Office, a drawing was prepared that showed a new, twin-arched footbridge over four tracks. It was beautifully decorated with designs similar to patterns used on various railway works associated with the construction of the railway between Town Hall and Waverton, opened in 1932. It seems that the 1921 designed footbridge was too costly and a second plan was issued in 1923 showing a much plainer bridge, with minimal decoration. In 1924, the footbridge was constructed using concrete, poured in situ, for the trestles supporting the stepways, the stepways and the deck of the bridge. In place of the 1921 concrete arches were more traditional steel beams. However, the concept

of the arch was expressed in the trestles. The NSW railway bridge historian, Dr. Don Fraser, advises that this was the first footbridge of its type. The steelwork is marked "BHP". Croydon remained the only example of its type.

In 1923, planning for the six tracks took an extremely unusual twist. A second plan was prepared for an overhead booking office but, this time, the selected material was to be pre-cast concrete units. At the Pre-cast Concrete Works at Auburn, the Engineer-in-Chief for Existing Lines, Robert Ranken, had expanded the number of products to be made in conjunction with the electrification of the suburban railway network. This included platform walls, jack arches for bridges, slabs for overbridges and corbels used to mount awning brackets.[14] The features of the design were:

1. Concrete unit construction
2. Hipped roof with Fibro cement slates with 4" overlap – small terracotta finials at each end of ridge (this version was built)
3. 2nd plan is for a cut hip roof with terracotta 'terminals' and Fibro cement slated with 4" overlap
4. Transverse gable over booking hall with Fibro cement sheets
5. Water paint ceiling and gables – slabs not painted internally or externally in one plan but are so in the second plan
6. Wooden roller shutter in front of bookstall to be fitted by manufacturer – second plan has no bookstall
7. Ticket window 2' wide and 1' 9 ¼" high with a special slab below
8. 10' 9" ceiling height
9. Sliding gates across entrance to booking hall
10. No parcels facility

The overhead booking office was built using pre-cast concrete units on the new, concrete footbridge. It is widely known that the use of pre-cast concrete units for platform buildings was extremely rare, with Toongabbie (in 1919) the only other Sydney suburban station to have such material. In 1924, plans were prepared initially for new platform buildings at Flemington and Lidcombe using pre-cast concrete units but these did not proceed and new plans were issued and approved for conventional brick platform buildings (extant at Flemington). Pre-cast concrete units were viewed as inferior to brick and to be restricted to rural areas. Perhaps Toongabbie was deemed rural but certainly Croydon was not in that category. The explanation will remain a mystery for the present. The design of the pedestrian bridge was also highly unusual. The use of concrete for both the pedestrian bridge and the overhead booking office is probably linked but why build these two structures at Croydon?

[14] R. Ranken, *Electrification of Sydney and Suburban Railways – 1 Track and Construction Work*, a Paper read before the Institution of Engineers, reprinted, St. James, ARHS, 1987, p. 47

Upon reflection, the use of concrete for the overhead booking office and the footbridge seem to fit into a much wider phase of railway history between 1917 and 1923 in which there was much experimentation as to how and where concrete was to be used. There is considerable inconsistency in the early use of pre-cast concrete structures. The authority on NSW pre-cast concrete buildings, Paul Horder, indicates that concrete construction policy was not expressed to its extreme standardisation until 1926.

Croydon station history covers both the pre-standard or experimental period and the standard period. The following structural features at Croydon reflect the use of concrete:

TABLE: USE OF CONCRETE AT CROYDON STATION 1921-1926

DATE PLANNED	ITEM	DATE BUILT	TYPE OF CONSTRUCTION	STATUS
1921	Footbridge	Not built	Mass concrete	-
1923	Overhead booking office	1924	Pre-cast concrete unit	Demolished in 1996
1923	Footbridge	1924	Pre-cast concrete	Extant
1926	Awning corbels & thresholds for building on platform Nos. 3, 4 & 5	1927	Pre-cast, re-inforced mass concrete	Extant
1926	Platform walls	1927	Pre-cast concrete units	Demolished early 1990s

While the suburb of Croydon had once attracted very, very affluent residents, this had changed by the 1920s. In the 1910s, the suburb attracted more upper middle class people with restricted budgets and this trend was sustained in the 1920s. Croydon flourished with what has been described as "simple cottages".[15] Its conservative inhabitants would offer little protest at something that was unusual for Sydney's railway system.[16] Do these factors provide an explanation why Croydon was chosen as the location for the experiment in concrete?

1927 – THE SIX TRACK PERIOD

[15] Coupe, op. cit., p. 174

[16] One third of the people at Croydon in 1928 voted in a referendum to prohibit alcohol. See P. Spearitt, *Sydney's Century,* University of NSW Press, 2000, p. 206

The subway at the Sydney end was lengthened to accommodate the fifth and sixth tracks, which were built on the southern side beyond the former Down Local platform. The subway was closed in 1987, being filled in with earth.

Also part of the sextuplication was the erection of a new (present), brick building on the existing platform Nos. 2 and 3. Robert Ranken approved a brick platform building, with the following room designations - General Waiting Room, Ladies' Room and Lavatory and 'Brooms' & 'Urinals'. The design features were:

1. Length 72 feet 4 long inches by x 11 feet wide internal
2. 9 inch wide brickwork, except the building ends where cavity brickwork was applied, all set in English bond
3. Use of yuck-coloured common bricks from the NSW State brickwork at Homebush
4. Absence of the traditional rendered string course around the external walls
5. Symmetrical 11 feet platform wide awnings supported on 'standard brackets' on concrete corbels
6. Porched entry to ladies' room and lavatory
7. 1 foot and 1 ¼ inch Hardwood flooring in waiting rooms – remainder concrete
8. 11 feet ceiling height
9. Small corrugated iron on ceilings
10. Rendered and set internal walls
11. Red coloured soldier bricks above window heads
12. Bullnose (rounded) bricks used for window sills
13. Square profiles to all window and door openings
14. 6 inch wide " stock" cornices (i.e. not specially acquired or made)
15. No. 26 galvanised gal iron on the roof, but a later plan in 1926 has corrugated Fibrolite
16. Lead damp course
17. 6 inch wide "breachs cowls" on the roof ridge for ventilation
18. 'Zinc terminal' finials on the roof ends
19. No chimneys, no fireplaces and no heating
20. Nine pane clear glass in upper window sashes and six panel fanlights
21. Four panel doors with the lower panels smaller

The above features of the building were not restricted to the building at Croydon but were applied to all buildings erected between Sydney and Strathfield for the sextuplication, namely Newtown, Petersham and Burwood Nos. 4/5 platforms. These were further examples of the austerity structures built at Flemington and on platform No. 1 at Lidcombe in 1924 (now demolished). These structures were amongst the last of the Federation-influenced style to be built in the Sydney suburban area.

The Croydon building is consistent with the prevailing design for urban areas that was in use between 1892 and 1932. However, like all other examples built in that year, the structure was stripped of most ornamentation. The most obvious feature is the absence of the moulded string course around the exterior walls. The windows also their ornamental treatment, with simple sills and no moulding above the window heads.

The new walls for platform Nos. 3, 4 and 5 at the station were renewed using pre-cast concrete units, a common practice for a few years in the mid to late 1920s. Apparently, while concrete was not to be used for the platform buildings in Sydney, it was satisfactory for platform faces.

The then existing small timber shed from 1891 was relocated from the former Down Slow platform to the present Down Local platform and remains there today. Probably at that time, the brick chimney and the doors at the front were removed. One interesting feature of the awning in front of the platform No. 5 building is that it is curved.

The last component of the sextuplication works was the provision of the present footbridge. Eric Dunlop writes that the new concrete footbridge was opened in 1928 in connection with sextuplication of the Illawarra Junction-Strathfield corridor.[17] From this time until 1987, there was pedestrian access to the platforms from both ends of the station. Robert Ranken approved a beautiful overhead bridge in 1921 with two spans, each covering two tracks. Thus, the bridge was designed for four tracks, some six years before sextuplication. This bridge is partially extant.

Graham Harper informs that electrification brought with it the need to re-signal the six tracks. It was felt that the indications given by signals with arms could be compromised by the overhead wiring, and hence, they were largely replaced on the Main Suburban and Illawarra Lines in conjunction with electrification in the mid-1920s. At this time, the preference was for the new double light colour light signals to be placed above the lines to which they applied, and the Main Suburban line in particular had business-like gantries spanning all six lines, with up to six signals on each gantry.

The signal gantries in turn fell out of favour in the 1990s, with stringent Occupational Safety and Health requirements making themselves felt, and in conjunction with a major re-cabling project, the old gantries were largely torn down. Where there was no room for signals to be placed between the running lines, new gantries were provided, but many signals were also placed on their own posts, free of any overhead structures. This can be demonstrated at Croydon by the fact that all twelve signals governing entry to and exit from the platforms are placed on their own individual posts, due to additional space being afforded for their placement by the widened track centres to accommodate the

[17] Dunlop, op. cit., p. 89

platforms. The signals between Croydon and Ashfield and Burwood are on gantries because no such space exists between the rails.

1933-1971 – ADDITIONS, SUBTRACTIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS

In 1933, the Chief Civil Engineer approved the demolition of the brick building that was adjacent to the Up Main, though it did not serve it. The building was 78 feet long and 14 feet wide. The platform was removed as part of the sextuplication works but the building remained no doubt due to its co-function of a load-bearing retaining wall. The stairs to the former Up Fast platform survive as an indicator to the position of the platform and are visible in Preston, op. cit., p. 82.[18] An excellent photograph of the "phantom" steps is in *Australian Railway History*, May, 2010, p. 184. The photograph, taken in 1992, also shows the concrete unit booking office on the overbridge.

Two initiatives took place during the early period of World War 2. The 1892 timber building that was on platform Nos. 1 and 2 was demolished. In its place, the Acting Chief Civil Engineer, W. R. Beaver, approved a steel framed awning 56 feet long by 30 feet six inches wide. The roof was covered with three inch corrugated asbestos cement sheeting. Under the centre of the awning, Beaver approved a small waiting room 16 feet ten inches long and 11 feet three inches wide. The awnings on each side were cantilevered 11 feet one and a half inches on each side of the waiting room. The building had cement rendered internal walls and asbestos cement sheeting for the ceiling. Externally, there was a soldier course of bricks above metal-framed windows. This building survives.

With the demolition of the timber building, there was now no room for the Porters. A Porters' Room was installed under the stairs on platform Nos. 3 and 4, measuring– 9' 6' x 8' 3" with a concrete floor. The "materials are to be selected from the former station building on Nos. 1 and 2 platform when it is demolished to build new awning". It is hard to believe that these alterations were completed from October, 1941 to March 1942, which includes perhaps the most dire part of World War 2. It appears to be yet another case of non-essential work being completed to appease the uncooperative railway unions. The building has now been removed. The Porters' Room was removed prior to 1976.

The Chief Civil Engineer, A. C. Fewtrell, gave approval in September, 1947, for a new Parcels Office measuring 12 feet long to be added to the existing, overhead Booking Office on the northern side. It was completed in October, 1948. The roofline was

[18] Jim Longworth, in his article "Reading the Railway Landscape", *Australian Railway History*, Vol. 67 No. 871, May, 2010, p. 183 incorrectly states that the former platform served the Up Main track. The platform was removed before 1927 when sextuplication was opened. There has never been a platform serving the Up Main track at Croydon.

extended to match the existing roof and asbestos cement tiles were used, again to match the earlier building. The new wall materials differed. Timber stud walls were covered with asbestos cement sheets ¼ of an inch thick at the bottom and 3/16 of an thick at the top of the external walls. Wisely, 7/8 of an inch timber lining boards were used on all internal walls. At the bottom, there were traditional nine inch skirting boards around the walls.

After the Parcels Office was completed, the station, along with the entire urban railway system of Sydney, entered the long, long sleep of neglect until the 1990s. In 1957, fluorescent lighting was installed in the subway Booking Office and the similar facility on the overbridge.

1972-1988 – THE PTC AND SRA PERIODS

In this 16 year period, the only change at the station occurred in 1980 when the Booking and Parcels Offices on the overbridge were air-conditioned with a single Kelvinator unit, this being the standard machinery at the time.

1989-PRESENT - THE CITYRAIL PERIOD

Graffiti at the station was a problem for a long time, though is not now a problem. *Railway Digest* reported in 1990 that some girls from the near-by Presbyterian Ladies' College volunteered to remove the vandalism.[19]

Croydon station is the last station between Redfern and Homebush to retain a memorable part of the quadruplication time, namely the large palm trees that adorned many platforms. Somehow, one tree on platform Nos. 1 and 2 has survived the zeal that accompanied the early years of CityRail in the first half of the 1990s.

The last major works at Croydon were approved in 1994 and built in 1996. This involved canopies on stairs and platforms to buildings and new booking office on south side using compressed fibre sheeting on external walls. The canopies were not built. At the opening, there was one male, public and one female, public toilet on the overbridge. This has now been changed to one public, unisex toilet and one staff toilet. It was proposed to retain a part of the 1923 pre-cast concrete Booking Office. Indeed, the artist's impressions in 1996 shows the concrete units to be retained as part of a wall at the north end of the footbridge. Sadly, the evil forces with State Rail at the time disregarded the proposal and demolished all parts of the concrete structure.

In 2001, CCTV was provided at the station. A considerable amount of light green paint has been unsympathetically applied in the last year or so to the lower parts of the

[19] *Railway Digest*, vol. 28 No. 6, June, 1990, p. 209

footbridge. New, metal seats have been fixed on platform Nos. 3 and 4 but the early CityRail fiberglass seats (formerly red now blue) remain on the other platforms. Two garden beds have been provided on platform Nos. 3 and 4 but not the other platforms. New posts have been inserted into all platforms at the bottom of the stepways, no doubt to cater for the introduction of the proposed Opal tickets.

The assistance of Jon Breen and Paul Horder is acknowledged. Graham Harper wrote the information on signaling and safeworking and his contribution is greatly appreciated.

Stuart Sharp

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